

be investing more in our domestic critical infrastructure and in our first responders.

Although we have taken steps to boost our homeland security since the attacks on September 11, our critical infrastructure remains largely exposed and our emergency first responders are spread too thin. Our port authorities have identified \$8.4 billion for meeting Federal security requirements; transit agencies have identified \$6 billion for making trains and buses safer for passengers; and firefighters have identified over \$4 billion for performing their critical duties safely and efficiently.

As the Senate considered this legislation, I was offered an amendment that increased resources to our Nation's firefighters by \$25 million above the bill's allocation of \$655 million. This amendment was cosponsored by colleagues, Senators DEWINE, MIKULSKI, and SNOWE, and was agreed to by unanimous consent.

I also offered an amendment that would have increased critical infrastructure security and first responder funding by \$16 billion to a total of \$20 billion. My amendment would have codified a recommendation made 3 years ago by a task force chaired by our former colleague, Warren Rudman, along with a distinguished panel of national security, intelligence, military and public health officials.

Regrettably, this measure—along with other measures I supported seeking to raise resources for critical infrastructure protection and first responders—were not adopted. Members who spoke in opposition to these amendments argued that we could not afford the extra cost. Ironically, many of the Members who opposed these amendments have supported permanent tax cuts for the most affluent of Americans—tax cuts that have been projected to cost \$1 trillion over the next 15 years. If we can afford to give such a generous tax break to the few thousand wealthiest Americans, then why can we not afford adequately to safeguard 281 million Americans from terrorist attacks at a mere fraction of that cost?

We are living in extraordinary times. Never before in our history has there been a prolonged period of time when the threat of harm to Americans on their own soil has been so high. While it has been almost 5 years since terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, the more recent attacks in Madrid, London, and Mumbai tell us that we must remain vigilant about our domestic security. They tell us that we must renew and redouble our efforts to prevent and respond to terrorism here at home.

On balance, I voted for this legislation because the funding it appropriates does take important steps towards meeting our domestic security needs. However, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming years to find and provide the necessary resources that can make our

Nation as safe and strong as it can possibly be.

FEMA

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, earlier this week, I voted with a bipartisan majority of Senators to strengthen FEMA while leaving it in the Department of Homeland Security. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the woeful response of the Federal Emergency Management Administration, I was prepared to remove FEMA from the Department of Homeland Security. At the time, it was clear that FEMA had been stripped of necessary resources and leadership, and that, as a result of these choices, it had failed the citizens of the gulf coast.

I changed my mind and voted to strengthen FEMA for three important reasons. First, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee conducted extensive hearings and oversight into the problems that led to the catastrophe of Katrina and how to fix this systemic failure. They conducted a 7-month investigation, including 23 hearings, heard testimony from 85 witnesses, interviewed 325 individuals, and reviewed 838,000 documents. They obviously did their homework.

Second, as a result of this exhaustive research, they made substantive proposals to strengthen the role of FEMA within the Department of Homeland Security. These changes will provide new statutory protections to ensure that the Administrator had direct access to the President, that it restores authorities to work directly with State and local agencies, and that it strengthens regional authorities by creating teams to foster cooperation and joint training for local emergency managers and first responders.

The final, and most important, reason that I decided to vote to strengthen FEMA as a component of the Department of Homeland Security is because of the position of local law enforcement and first responders. The bottom line is that I have spent my career working with the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriffs Association, the National Association of Police Organizations, the National Troopers Coalition, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Major Cities Chief, and local first responders. I strongly value the opinions of these individuals, and if they believe that this is the right approach to help them in their efforts to save lives, I am willing to give it a shot.

I hope that the changes voted for by the vast majority of Senators earlier this week will return FEMA to its vaunted status of the 1990s. The American people deserve no less.

RECENT ATTACKS ON ISRAEL

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to offer my full support of Israel's decision to defend

itself. I also commend U.N. Ambassador John Bolton for vetoing the U.N. Security Council resolution addressing the situation in the Middle East, because of its unbalanced approach to the situation.

Unfortunately, due to the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by Hamas and the continued rocket attacks by Hamas and Hezbollah against Israeli towns and villages, the Israeli Government was forced to defend itself.

There is no doubt that the Governments of Syria, Lebanon, and Iran are responsible for these attacks. These Governments provide the military equipment, training, and financing for Hamas and Hezbollah to conduct their terror campaigns. Their continued support for these terrorist organizations has left the Israeli Government with no other option than to defend itself by pursuing terrorist safe havens in Gaza and southern Lebanon.

Israel continues to be one of America's closest allies, and in this period of terror against the Israeli people it is essential that we support Israel's decision to defend itself against these terrorist attacks. I ask that the world community join in solidarity with Israel as it takes necessary steps to provide security to its people and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure in the Palestinian areas and in southern Lebanon.

Israel was attacked for one reason—these terror organizations and some governments in the region believe Israel does not have a right to exist as a country, much less live peacefully as a country. The unprovoked missile launches against Israel civilians, suicide bombings of women and children, and the kidnapping and torture of Israeli soldiers is the result of Iran, Syria, and certain factions of the Lebanese Government's inaction towards these terrorist organizations in their country.

The cycle of violence can only end if these countries dismantle these terrorist groups by cutting off funding and prohibiting terrorist organizations from participating in their governments. Otherwise, Israel will be required to continue defending itself against terrorist strongholds, and innocent civilians will suffer greatly—all of this because certain extreme elements remain bent on destruction rather than reconciliation.

Israel is a sovereign country that deserves to live in peace. Israel deserves to live in peace, free from the attacks of those who prey upon its open and democratic society. Unfortunately, innocent civilians are ones who pay the price on both sides of the conflict. Yet, until Israel is able to live free of missile attacks, kidnappings, and suicide bombers the unfortunate reality is that suffering will continue.

Mr. President, I believe that the United States should and must support Israel's right to defend itself. I hope that my colleagues will join me in expressing their support for one of our closest allies.